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ABSTRACT

In 1984 the Edgewood and South San Antonio Independent School Districts implemented the Valued Youth Partnership Program (VYP). VYP identifies Hispanic junior high and high school students at high risk of dropping out and gives them an opportunity to serve as tutors of younger children. As they tutor, the older students also learn basic skills, develop new positive self-perceptions, and remain in school. Developed by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) and funded by Coca-Cola USA, VYP includes the following components: (1) classes for student tutors to develop communication, reading, and writing skills as well as practical awareness of child growth and development theories; (2) tutoring sessions at elementary schools; (3) field trips and awards banquets to expose students to opportunities in the broader community and increase self-esteem; (4) role modeling to expose students to successful adults; and (5) parental involvement to support project goals. Program evaluation results indicate that VYP has been successful. Of 100 students identified as being at high risk of dropping out, 94 remained in school, while 6 dropped out. Students' grades in English and mathematics improved and their overall grade point averages increased. Other benefits included a decrease in student absences and a decline in discipline referrals. (PS)

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VALUED YOUTH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM: DROPOUT PREVENTION THROUGH CROSS-AGE TUTORING

[Summary]

by

Alicia Salinas Sosa

from
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VALUED YOUTH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM: DROPOUT PREVENTION THROUGH CROSS-AGE TUTORING

by Alicia Salinas Sosa

For several decades, school district administrators have examined questions regarding how best to teach basic academic skills to Hispanic junior high and high school students who are over-age due to retention in grades and who are reading two or more years below grade level. More recently, educators have become increasingly concerned because of the alarmingly high dropout rates reported for Hispanics. The reported figures range from 55 to 65 percent at the national level, according to studies conducted by Aspira of America, Inc., to 32 to 44 percent reported for school districts in San Antonio, Texas (Cárdenas, Robledo and Cortez, 1986).

While school personnel, at some time or another, have implemented responses to the perceived problems of underachievement and dropouts, few had been encouraged by the programs' results. That is, not until the last two years, when a new program was implemented in the Edgewood and the South San Antonio Independent School Districts.

Developed by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) and funded by Coca-Cola USA, the Valued Youth Partnership Program (VYP) was first implemented in 1984. Through the care and the concern of school personnel, Hispanic students at high risk of dropping out are identified as valued youth and are given an opportunity to make a difference by serving as tutors of younger children. Under their tutelage and care, the young Hispanic students being tutored make gains in school. Most importantly, as the tutors care for and teach basic skills to the younger children, they themselves learn the basic skills, develop new positive perceptions of self and remain in school.

Program Development

Over a period of years, the staff at IDRA's Center for the Prevention and Recovery of Dropouts has studied dropout prevention programs and the students who participated in these programs. Research indicates that a great number of the students who drop out of school or who are at risk of dropping out are characterized by: (a) underachievement in basic skills; (b) poor performance in class; (c) manifestations of deteriorating self-image; (d) high rates of absenteeism; and (e) an often pressing need to assist their families financially.

The staff at IDRA was similarly familiar with the results of research indicating that use of students as tutors impacted underachieving students both cognitively and academically. Included among these were the independently conducted studies by Rogers (1970) and Rust (1970) which found significant academic gains with sixth grade underachievers. Other studies showed a ten percent improvement in teacher assigned grades for failing mathematics students (Horan et al, 1974) and a 14 to 16 percent gain in academic grades of students in a math tutoring program (Harris and Sherman, 1973).

It was also well known that the benefits of tutoring extended into the personal and social realms. These included: (a) an improved self-concept (Vasallo, 1973, Armstrong, 1979, Bondi 1982), and (b) increased cooperation with others (Amstrong, 1979, Bondi, 1982).

Thus, IDRA integrated into its program design aspects regularly found in both remedial academic programs and tutoring programs, while it also incorporated aspects recommended for reducing the dropout rate.

Program Components

The VYP Program includes five major components: (1) classes for student tutors, (2) tutoring sessions, (3) field trips, (4) role modeling, and (5) parental involvement.

Component I: Classes for Student Tutors. Student tutors are trained through enrollment in a course which is approved for student credit by the state education agency. The goals of the course are as follows:

(1) to develop communication skills that will enable the student tutor to become an effective tutor;

(2) to develop reading and writing skills which will enable tutors to teach these skills to those tutored; and

(3) to develop practical awareness of child growth and development theories which are central to the tutoring activity.

The classes are taught by a certified teacher in English or Composite Social Studies who also serves as Teacher/ Coordinator. The curriculum focuses on four areas: (1) interpersonal communication skills, (2) child growth and development, (3) language arts skills improvement, and (4) self-image and moti-vation. The teaching schedules are structured to enable the teacher to visit tutoring sessions. Feedback to the student tutors is an integral part of the tutoring class.

Component II: Tutoring Sessions. Tutoring sessions are located at the elementary schools nearest

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VYP Program

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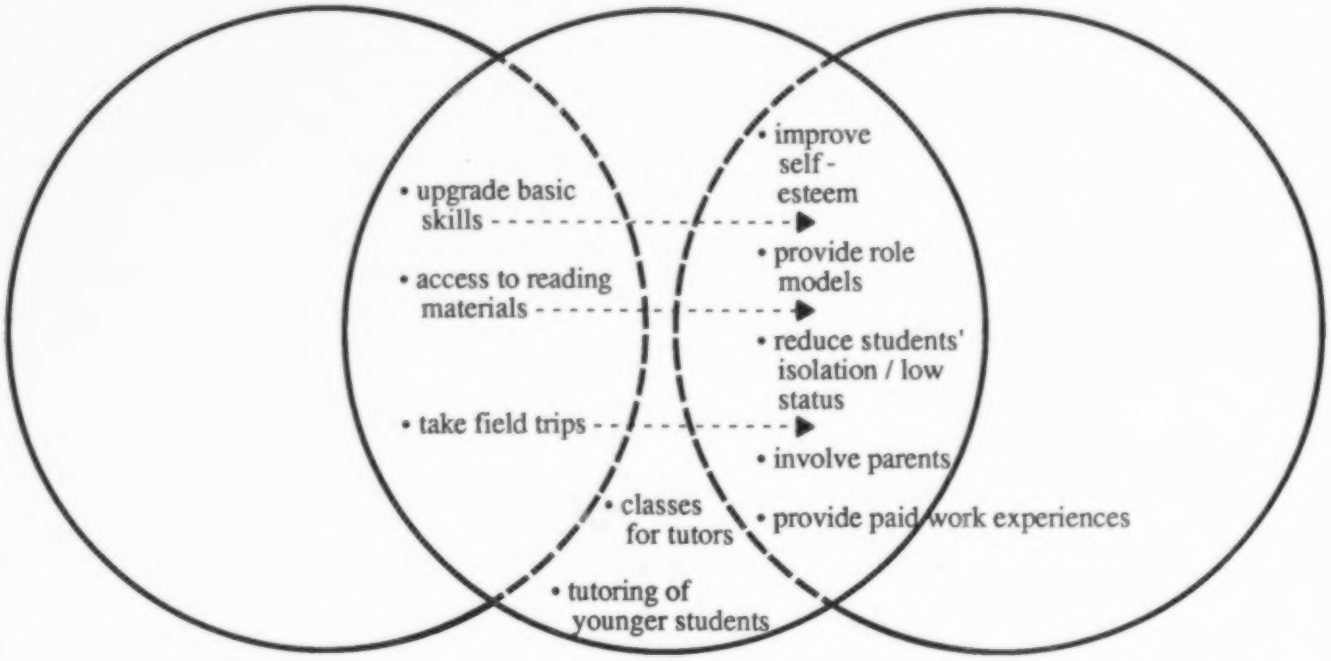
VALUED YOUTH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

DEVELOPED BY IDRA


• improve self-esteem
• upgrade basic skills
• provide role models
• access to reading materials
• reduce students' isolation / low status
• take field trips
• involve parents
• classes for tutors
• provide paid work experiences
• tutoring of younger students
TRADITIONAL REMEDIAL PROGRAMS
TUTORING PROGRAMS
DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

the host junior or high school. At the designated hours/days, the tutor walks or is transported to the assigned elementary school. While tutoring is conducted immediately following regular school hours, a part-time aide or parent volunteer supervises the children in the tutoring room as they await the arrival of the tutors. A person is made responsible for building and physical plant security for after-school hours.

Tutors engage in tutoring activities five to eight hours per week. They receive the minimum federal wage for all tutoring activities and are expected to adhere to the basic work ethics for the school district. The provision of the stipend for the tutors not only serves as an initial incentive for participation in the program, but also has the practical effect of relieving financial pressure on both the family and the student.

Component III: Field Trips. Field trips are designed to expose students to economic and cultural opportunities in the broader community. They provide a means for tutors and tutees to interact and develop a more productive relationship that ultimately enhances the tutoring environment.

One of the most important activities of the year is a field trip to the Coca-Cola bottling plant, where students receive special recognition for fulfilling their responsibilities as tutors. At the plant, students receive a tour, a dinner, and a red polo shirt with white lettering which identifies them as student tutors in the Coca-Cola sponsored Valued Youth Partnership Program. An executive of the company provides words of appreciation detailing the importance of their involvement in the tutoring program.

In a second recognition event, students attend an Awards Banquet where they receive a certificate of appreciation from an executive from the sponsoring company and the teacher coordinator from their school district. Invited guests include school officials and dignitaries from the public and private sectors. Student tutors listen to a short, inspiring or motivational speech from a now successful Hispanic who shares

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VYP Program

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some of the events which helped him/her meet his/her educational goals. At this end-of-year event, students also receive a t-shirt displaying a positive message, e.g., *Blessed With Bilingual Brains*.

Component IV: Role Modeling. Adults who are successful in their fields serve as role models and speak to the tutors on various topics related to counseling and career development. Successful role models have included graduates of the school districts who have gone on to the following occupations: doctors, professors, judges, attorneys, school board members, members of congress, city council members, artists, singers, superintendents of school districts, school principals, and business excutives.

Component V: Parental Involvement. Activities with parents include at least one meeting to enlist their understanding and support for the goals of the project and for their specific assistance and support in encouraging their child to remain in school. Teachers make one home-visit and/or parent conference with the parents of each tutor in the project. It is highly recommended that one or more parent meetings be held to address parenting issues identified during home visits. A parent survey is an important part of the program evaluation.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation results indicate that the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Partnership program impacted positively on the school and personal lives of Hispanic students. Of 100 students identified as being at high risk of dropping out, 94 remained in school while 6 dropped out. This rate is well below the 32 to 37 percent student attrition rate for school districts having similar student characteristics (Cárdenas, Robledo, and Cortez, 1986). The tutoring activities and the basic skills enrichment conducted through the classes for tutors, also helped to improve student' grades in English and mathematics as well as to increase their overall grade point averages. Other program benefits included a decrease in student absences and a decline in discipline referrals (Cortez and Penny-Velasquez, 1986).

Students self-report data indicated that they had reaped many benefits from this program which reached beyond school life to enrich their personal lives. They reported learning patience, getting along better with their siblings, and helping them with their homework. Most importantly, being "behind the teacher's desk" had given some students a glimpse of themselves as reluctant learners and their success with the young children had given them the motiviation needed to change.

A copy of the *Valued Youth Partnerships: Programs in Caring* handbook is available for $4.00 from IDRA.

Dropout Project

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cost of keeping each of these students in school was $3,859 per averted dropout. In addition, the State would have realized a savings of $652 million in social expenditures related to crime, welfare, incarceration and unemployment costs. Every dollar invested in educating potential dropouts will result in a return of nine dollars. An investment in human capital yields substantial short and long term results.

Copies of the summary are available from IDRA. The cost is $5.50 (postage included)

FELLOWSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

The National Council of La Raza, a national Hispanic organization, is conducting a nationwide competition to select an Education Policy Fellow for a nine-month fellowship in the Council's Washington, D.C. office. The Fellowship includes a monthly stipend of approximately $1,000.

The Fellow will be assigned to La Raza's Education Policy Analysis Component and will have the opportunity to work in a variety of areas including: (1) carrying out secondary research on education policy issues; (2) preparing policy papers, issue briefs, testimony, newsletters and other documents; (3) assisting with other education policy analysis and program development tasks; and (4) representing the Council on advocacy and coalition work. The fellowship may lead to a full-time, professional staff position as an Education Policy Analyst.

This fellowship is made possible by grants, from the Carnegie and other foundations.

Applicants should have the following qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree required, master's degree preferred;
- Experience as a teacher or administrator or related educational experience;
- Experience in working with Hispanic children, and adults and communities in public school or community-based settings;
- Training and/or experience in educational policy analysis or research and strong analytical skills;
- Strong writing and oral presentation ability;
- Capability to work effectively in high-pressure situations;
- Initiative;
- Experience with Hispanic community-based organizations preferred;
- Bilingual Spanish-English strongly preferred.

For further information contact:

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